



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime (406-461-0587)

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, June 20 - June 26, 2009

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2008 annual report) can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

FWP wolf staff were all out on trap lines this week. Trapping efforts will likely slow up during the July 4th Holiday weekend due to the increased recreational activity.

FWP volunteers Charlie Bahnson and Erika Edgely joined the field team in late May and have been a great help!

Three wolves were fitted with GPS collars as part of ongoing research projects (see below).

Boyd and Bahnson are currently running traps to collar an individual in the Murphy Lake pack. Laudon and Edgely are working on wolf packs in the Swan Valley. Bradley is trapping in the West Fork Bitterroot. Asher also has traplines going.

Flights: Lance flew in southwest Montana (Big Hole Valley area) on 6/23. Laudon flew in northwest Montana on 6/23.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 6/19, WS confirmed that 1 ram was killed by a wolf or wolves and 2 rams were injured by a wolf or wolves on private ground south of Cascade. A lone black wolf was previously reported on the ranch in the area. WS has been authorized to collar and release one wolf and has set traps.

On 6/20, WS investigated a dead calf on private land southwest of Valier. The calf was discovered a couple days prior to the reporting to WS and the investigation. Wolf tracks were found in the area and had fed on the carcass. A grizzly bear had also taken over the carcass since the discovery and

reporting. It was determined to be a probable wolf kill. No packs or new pairs are known in the area and this may have been a single wolf moving through the area. FWP and WS will keep in touch with area landowners and monitor.

On 6/24, WS confirmed one calf killed by a wolf or wolves and one calf as a probable wolf kill north of Butte in Elk Park on private land. WS has been authorized to collar and release one wolf. There have been intermittent reports between Helena and Butte since last fall. Previous winter surveys and scouting have not pinned down a new pair or pack yet.

No further reports or rumors of wolves or wolf hybrids have been received from Garfield County.

Outreach and Education

Nothing to report.

Research Activities

On 6/20, Laudon captured and collared a wolf in the Dutch pack (North Fork Flathead drainage / Glacier National Park). The wolf was fitted with a GPS collar for a research project on trophic cascades led by Cristina Eisenberg from Oregon State University.

On 6/22, FWP seasonal Kris Boyd and FWP volunteer Charlie Bahnson captured a wolf from the Lazy Creek pack. This wolf was fitted with a GPS collar for the University of Montana / FWP project to develop more cost efficient ways to monitor the number of packs in Montana.

On 6/26, Bradley captured the breeding female of the Trail Creek pack. This wolf was also fitted with a GPS collar as part of University of Montana / FWP research project.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On 6/19, a ranch manager reported shooting a lone wolf that was harassing and chasing cattle and horses on private ground southwest of Jackson. The incident was investigated by FWP law enforcement and was determined to be lawful under the state statute (which is similar to the old federal regulations that used to apply across southern Montana). Last week the ranch had reported hazing two wolves out of cattle to WS and FWP on their property east of Wisdom previously. The wolf is most likely to be associated with the Miner Lakes pack

Other

NEW -- Delisting Litigation Formally Starts

On June 2, a coalition of 13 groups, represented by the law firm EarthJustice, challenged the USFWS delisting decision in Federal District Court in Missoula (9th Circuit). The complaint alleges the USFWS delisting decision was an arbitrary and capricious violation of the federal Endangered Species Act for a variety of reasons. A request for a preliminary injunction (which if granted by the Court, would keep federal ESA protections in place during the litigation) has not been filed at this time. The Greater Yellowstone has also filed a lawsuit challenging the federal delisting decision. The groups will be represented by their own attorney's, respectively, but the cases were consolidated. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will seek to intervene in the Missoula Court on behalf of the State of Montana. Montana supports federal efforts to delist wolves.

Additionally, the State of Wyoming filed a lawsuit in the 10th Circuit (Cheyenne Wyoming) challenging USFWS's rejection of Wyoming's regulatory framework and state plan.

Background for Montana

On May 4, gray wolves in Montana were delisted. Conservation and management are guided by Montana laws, administrative rules (ARM 12.9.1301 – 12.9.1305), and the state's federally-approved plan. Wolves in Montana were automatically reclassified to a "species in need of management" statewide on May 4. The gray wolf is protected statewide, though individual wolves may be hazed, harassed, or killed if seen actively attacking, killing, or threatening to kill livestock. Incidents must be reported and each will be investigated. Wolves may also be killed to protect human life. See the FWP wolf web page for a Fact Sheet and answers to frequently asked questions about delisting. The FWP wolf web page also has information about state law and regulations and what livestock owners can do to protect livestock. See: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Montana 2009 Wolf Hunting Season: FWP and the FWP Commission continue efforts to develop and prepare for a potential 2009 season. The season structure previously adopted by the FWP Commission is still in place for a potential fall 2009 season. But FWP and the FWP Commission must still establish a quota (the total number of wolves that could be taken by hunters) for 2009. The public comment opportunity for establishing final 2009 wolf hunting quotas closed on June 19. The FWP Commission will hear FWP's recommended final 2009 wolf quotas at its meeting in Helena on July 8. The meeting will be held at the FWP Headquarters building. The full agenda is available on the FWP Website.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

Nothing to report. The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

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To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana at the statewide office: 657-6464. Or, call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.